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ABSTRACT

The program review process in Kansas Regent's institutions was studied, based on Guba's three policy types: policy-in-intention (statements about policy); policy-in-implementation (behaviors/activities found in the process of implementing policy); and policy-in-experience (constructions/perceptions of individuals as they experienced the policy enactment). The program review process of the University of Kansas School of Education was assessed and compared with processes at the Emporia State University and Kansas State University. Specific objectives were to: determine whether discrepencies existed between policy-in-intention and policy-in-experience; identify factors in the implementation process that produced discrepancies; and recommend interventions that would reduce the discrepancy between the processes of intention, implementation, and experience. In addition to examining documents and records of the colleges, interviews were conducted with staff members. It was found that Guba's policy types were helpful in viewing the program review process. Of four policy intentions for conducting the program review, only one, strengthening the role of the Board of Regents, was not accomplished as desired. Participants perceived the process differently depending on their role. Additional findings are covered. (SW)

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Changes in Program Review: A Case Study

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This paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio, Texas, February 20-23, 1986. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Changes in Program Review Policy: A Case Study

After several decades of growth and expansion, higher education is faced with static and declining budgets which appear to threaten academic quality and program flexibility. The declining budgets have raised several issues related to the role of higher education in society today. Included among these issues are the extent to which the public should support higher education, increased demands for accountability, the role of state and federal government in policy making for higher education, and the percentage of higher education funding which should be borne by the parents and students. Largely as a direct result of the accountability issue but related to issues of financial support for higher education, program review has come into vogue to assist colleges and universities in making budgetary and programmatic allocations.

Concurrent with the increase of program review has been a flood of reports related to the quality of American education (Adler, 1982; Boyer, 1983; Feistritzer, 1983; Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy, 1983; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; The National Institute of Education, 1984; The National Endowment for Humanities, 1984; Association of American Colleges, 1985; The National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, 1985). By far the most widely publicized of these reports has been A

Nation at Risk, prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education and published in April of 1983. The report is a study of the problems facing American education and it found that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (p. 5). While this report and others have studied various aspects of the problems in the educational systems, virtually all the reports have indicated the need to improve the teacher education preparation provided by colleges and universities.

Problem Statement

Within this climate of increased accountability, declining resources, and national concern over the quality of the educational system, many states have initiated reviews to assist in determining priorities for academic programs. Evidence of this is seen in the involvement of state agencies in program reviews. In a 1981 study conducted for the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), Barak found that fewer than five of the state coordinating/governing agencies had conducted reviews ten years ago. At the time of the study, twenty-eight state level agencies reported the authority to review existing programs and most were involved in some type of program approval.

The heightened awareness of boards and state agencies to the concept of program review can be attributed to several factors including enrollment imbalances caused by increased student interest in business and technology and limited growth or actual decreases in federal and state funds. Millard (1977) believed the growing interest in state level program review was related as much to legislative concern with minimum competency on the elementary/secondary level as to the enrollment shifts and retrenchment.

Theoretical Framework

The literature provided multiple and often conflicting definitions for policy. In fact, Klein and Murphy (1973) stated that the same word was often used to describe different concepts. They suggested that policy is better defined as a continuum moving from the very generalized statements about the purpose of an organization to specific statements regarding rules in an organization. Guba (1984) theorized that the word "policy" has multiple definitions and the type of definition applied in a situation "determines the kinds of policy questions that are asked, the kinds of policy-relevant data that are collected, the source of data that are tapped, the methodology that is used, and finally, the policy products that emerge" (p. 63).

According to Guba (1984), three policy types are derived from eight basic definitions of policy found in the literature. It was these three policy types--policy-in-intention, policy-in-implementation, and policy-in-experience--that formed the theoretical base for the study.

Policy-in-intention was defined by Guba (1984) as statements about policy. This type of policy is distinguished by assertion of intents or goals, standing goals, guides to discretionary actions and strategies to solve or ameliorate problems. Policy-in-implementation was characterized by behaviors or activities demonstrated in the process of implementing policy. Such behaviors or activities were defined by Guba (1984) as sanctioned behaviors, norms or conducts, and the cumulative output of the policy-making system. The third type of policy referred to by Guba was classified as the policy-in-experience and represented the constructions or perceptions of the individuals as they experienced the policy enactment. By examining the program review process from a variety of perspectives, the researcher sought to determine whether the types of policy as defined by Guba (1984) represented an appropriate theoretical framework in which to examine the program review process.

Examining the dynamic and value-laden elements of processes such as program review is difficult because the

process is more akin to James Joyce's "stream of consciousness" than to a unitarily measurable and controllable action such as financial audits or distribution of head counts per major program. Policy studies have frequently been limited to examination of intentions or statements about policy and/or the results of such policies on various programs or institutions. The Guba (1984) framework provides for a method of examining policy in action and demonstrates the non-unitary, non-linear nature of policy. Furthermore, if found appropriate to program review processes, the Guba (1984) framework would provide an excellent construct for "stepping into a stream" of events and demonstrating that what is intended by policy-makers is often not what is implemented nor what is experienced by those participating in the policy processes.

While there have been some studies related to the nature of program reviews (Melchiori, 1982), the use of reviews as retrenchment strategies (Mingle, 1981), and evaluation effectiveness of reviews (Baldridge, Kemerer and Green, 1982), little has been done to determine how the process of program review was actually applied in the field and how the process becomes modified and changed as a result of the social, economic, and political forces which impinged from the larger supra-system. Therefore, this study focused on the differences in policy types (Guba, 1984) as they were enacted through the program review

process conducted at the University of Kansas School of Education. The study then compared the results of the University of Kansas case with data collected at Emporia State University and Kansas State University to analyze the similarities and differences between policy enactments as defined by Guba.

Utilizing the case study approach, the researcher tested whether the policy-in-intention regarding program review differed from the policy-in-experience as perceived by the participants in the process and, where differences occurred, sought to identify the factors in the implementation process that produced such changes.

The purpose of the study, therefore, was 1) to examine the program review process implemented in three institutions in a midwestern state to determine if discrepancies existed between policy-in-intention and policy-in-experience (Guba, 1984); 2) to identify factors in the implementation process which produced discrepancies, where found; and 3) to recommend interventions in the process which would serve to reduce the rate of discrepancy between policy-in-intention, policy-in-implementation and policy-in-experience.

Definitions and Limitations of the Study

Many definitions of program review have appeared in the literature (examples of which are found in Folger, 1977, and Arns and Poland, 1980). However, the definition

which most appropriately represented the concept of program review examined in this study was that given by Seeley (1981) who defined program review as "a management and learning process of systematically identifying and collecting information about a set of related activities that have been developed to accomplish some end" (p. 45).

Several classifications of program review were also found in the literature. Harcleroad (1980) used the terms institutional and statewide while Barak (1985) identified a system dependent on the agency conducting the review. However, for this study, the classification internal and external mentioned by Baldridge, et al., 1982 most appropriately described the type of review studied.

External reviews were those that were done voluntarily (usually to secure accreditations) or involuntarily (to satisfy legislative mandates or regents policy). These reviews have been characterized by standard data requirements, pre-established formats, and evaluations conducted by those outside of the university. Self-studies for regional or specialized accreditations and program reviews completed by governing bodies or state agencies were two examples of such studies.

The subject of this study was an external review model formulated by the Kansas Board of Regents in December, 1982 and applied simultaneously to the schools of education at three institutions in Kansas. The term external was applied

because the evaluation was conducted by an external body of consultants for the Board of Regents. The review included all levels of programs from the associate through the doctoral level and was designed to be cyclical so that every program is reviewed once every five years. For example, the first year of the review, four programs were scheduled. In fiscal year 1984, seven programs including education were considered. The remaining programs are scheduled for fiscal years 1985-87. Each institution within the system with a program under review is asked to prepare and submit data regarding that program to the Board. The Board then uses those data to accomplish the following objectives:

(1) Further strengthen the role of the Board of Regents in governing the institutions under its jurisdiction;

(2) Increase the Board's knowledge and understanding of the programs conducted at its institutions in order to make informed decisions in an ever-changing environment;

(3) Provide for the periodic and systemwide review of all programs at each Regents insitution;

(4) Provide for additional self-study of all programs in order to improve management at the institutional level (Minutes, Kansas Board of Regents, December 17, 1982).

Research Methods

The research employed the case study method, including non-participant observation, interviews and document review in gathering the data. In order to increase the likelihood that the widest range and scope of data would be uncovered, purposive or theoretical sampling was used. The three institutions chosen to be sampled in the study were selected because they represented critical cases. According to Patton (1980), using the sampling strategy of critical cases allows "logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases because if it's true of this one case, it's likely to be true of all other cases" (p. 105).

Both the University of Kansas and Kansas State University were chosen because they are comprehensive research institutions with highly visible and politically sensitive schools of education. Kansas State University has as its primary mission extension and service to the state while the University of Kansas was noted for its research and the five-year extended teacher education program. Emporia State University was chosen because it had a large teacher education program and has gained recognition for strong programs in the areas of applied research to education and in-service programs for the public school sector.

The documents and records that were evaluated in this study were examined and collected over an eleven-month period while the researcher was on-site at one of the locations. Content analysis was employed as the method for the analysis of documents and records. "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 240).

Interviews were conducted with forty-eight individuals including faculty, staff, and administrators at the three institutions, selected members and former members of the Kansas Board of Regents, Board of Regents staff, and legislators who had participated in the program review. Since the basis of the inquiry was to search for the multiple perceptions regarding the process of program review, non-standardized, open-ended interviews were used.

The coding procedure for this study was initially determined by the research questions. These categories included types of policy statements, political, social or economic issues, process statements, centrality, quality and societal demand issues, and characteristics of internal and external models of review. As the study progressed, new categories were added and additional sorts were made. At the conclusion of the study, sixteen categories were used for the analysis of the data. Data analysis was performed simultaneously with data collection by adapting a commonly

used computer program Multiplan to the task of sorting and retrieving the data. The researcher found that by using the computer as a tool to manage, retrieve and organize the data into a variety of patterns, the research was greatly facilitated. Conrad and Reinharz (1984) recognized this advantage and maintained that "by taking over many of the mechanical aspects of qualitative analysis, the computer allows the researcher to devote more of his or her energy to the interpretative or analytic work, which is more significant and rewarding" (1984, p. 9).

Results and Discussion

The Kansas Board of Regents had four goals for conducting the program review which formed the policy-of-intent. The goals, which were detailed earlier, consisted of 1) strengthening the role of the Board of Regents in governing the institutions; 2) increasing the Board's knowledge and understanding of the programs; 3) providing for a systemwide review of all programs; and 4) providing for additional self-studies to improve institutional management.

The research indicated that goals two, three and four were readily fulfilled through the review process. In fact, the goal of Board education was cited by many participants as being one of the most important aspects of the review process. As one Board staff member said, "Just being on campus and experiencing the academic life is a positive

aspect of the review for the Regents. There was a certain value in talking to the faculty, understanding that they are real people and not so bad after all. It helps take away the myth" (April, 1985).

Certainly the Board succeeded in fulfilling goal three of providing a systemwide process for reviewing programs. Furthermore, the fourth goal of improving institutional management was realized by the increased institutional awareness for the need for accountability and credibility. The review process itself sensitized the campuses to the political side of academic life and some of the participants felt that this resulted in better management of the institution. "I believe the institutions' administrations are learning more about the programs than they ever have. They have to do this because they have to come before the Board and defend their programs" (Administrator, April, 1985).

The study found, however, that the first goal of strengthening the role of the Board of Regents in governing the institutions was not accomplished to the degree intended. An analysis of the data revealed three factors which resulted in discrepancies and differences between what was intended initially and what the participants experienced.

First, several members of the Board commented that they failed initially to appreciate the complexities of the

academic programs, especially in regard to the education programs. One Board member acknowledged that the "review process pointed out how big and how complex the institutions were" (April, 1985). A former Board member was more direct when stating their difficulties: "It was very confusing for the Board members to try to sort out the complexities of the various programs and we were confused about the nature of the programs. . . . If they (Board members) couldn't know something entirely or 100%, I was not sure whether they should be making those types of decisions" (May, 1985).

These comments reflect the business orientation of the Board but do not reflect the realities of higher education. Higher education is an enterprise which deals with people and with bodies of knowledge which cannot be measured by profit-loss statements nor can be ever known entirely or 100 per cent.

The education reviews were the first time the Regents were asked to look at programs which involved all of their institutions and to review so many different program areas. It was partially in recognition of this complexity that the Board retained consultants to conduct the reviews. Since consultants are frequently used in program review processes, it is a note of some importance that their effect on the policy-in-implementation be considered. The Board had hoped that the consultants would provide

recommendations for making some changes in the configurations of the education programs. They were, however, disappointed, and the consultants report focused almost entirely on graduate programs and failed to make any recommendations regarding teacher education programs, the original intent of the review. In the words of one Board member, "I had really hoped that the consultants would be able to come and make some substantial, significant, or radical recommendations regarding the configuration of the schools of education. But the report lacked significance and they really didn't say anything different than what the Regents would have found had they conducted the review themselves" (April, 1985).

Finally, the Board found that when it discussed making substantial changes in the program offerings, there were always those who opposed such changes and who would create political pressure on the Board to prevent action. It was the political action more than anything else which prevented the Board from fulfilling its intended policy goal. Participants in the process ruefully described the effects of the political action. One faculty member noted, ". . . that once politics enter into the decision-making process you have to ignore the data. That you have the information about which programs were good and bad, which were strong or weak, but politically they (the Board) could not act on it" (May, 1985). This opinion was reinforced by

a Board of Regents staff member: " If I could, I would try to totally do away with any political considerations, political being in the large sense of the legislature and the governor, because the political processes caused knee-jerk type reactions and it is almost impossible to be objective about things when they are in the political environment" (May, 1985).

Assumptions and Interpretations:

The process of program review was viewed by board members, staff and administrators as a means of limiting the political effects of decision-making on those in positions of power and authority. Many believed that the review process would gather and make available so much information that a consensus regarding future actions would be generated and, therefore, reduce or eliminate the political nature of program decisions. In actuality, the review process did increase the flow of information regarding these decisions, but it also heightened the attention on decisions, and, in part, acted to increase the politicization of the process. Consensus was not forthcoming but rather turf battles erupted which further increased the politics of the process. The program review process did not remove the politics from the decision making arena. In fact, the political environment is not only inescapable, it is so pervasive that one ought to expect its influence to be felt every step of the way in

such a process. The Board only happens to operate closer to the seat of the largest political influence--the legislature and the governor's office; but the institutions themselves are also a part of the system of systematic influences which "shape" the system and, in turn, are shaped by it.

This is why, in this instance, and in many other instances, policy-in-intent becomes a new creature--policy-in-implementation--which then metamorphoses into an entirely new creature--policy-in-experience. One cannot escape the influence of politics, because politics is an expression of the one or several value systems which operate in any given environment.

Conclusions and Interventions

By studying the program review process in the Kansas Regent's institutions, the researcher was able to observe changes in the process over time. The following paragraphs review these observations in order to determine if the Guba policy types are useful as a theoretical framework for understanding program review. In addition, some conclusions are drawn about how the process was experienced by the different participants. Finally, the paper concludes with a series of interventions or recommendations which may be useful in affecting changes in the process in the future.

Three Policy Types

Guba's three policy types (1984) reflected an accurate representation of the manner in which the policy of program review was viewed by the participants. In the beginning the policy-in-intent statements, those statements represented by the official policy statements approved by the Board in December, 1982, provided the basis on which the process was structured. In general, all participants accepted those goals and objectives, and data were collected to support such goals. For example, in the early stages of the review process, consideration was given to having all the institutions use the ETS surveys employed by the University of Kansas graduate school. However, during the implementation stage of the process, various participants began to make changes in the process, usually to achieve some other purpose than the ones stated in the original policy statements.

Nevertheless, it was only when the researcher interviewed the various participants in the process that the differences in policy-in-experience were noted. It was found that each individual, based on his or her own experience, background and organizational perspective, had assigned different values and meanings to the various activities in the process. Therefore, what the Board had intended as the goals of the process were altered by both the intervening policies of the implementation stage and

the individual attitudes of the participants as they experienced the policy actions. The process was perceived differently institutionally and individually. The recognition and awareness that policy does change over time is an important factor to be considered by both governing boards and administrations. The Guba description of policy types would suggest that policy will change from intent to implementation to experience and that such changes should be expected by those involved in the program review process.

Interventions

Based on the data and the conclusions drawn, the study indicated that there were some strategies or steps that could be taken to gain maximum benefit from the review process and to shape changes in the process as it is implemented.

In the previous section, it was noted that participants perceived the process differently depending on their organizational role. This evidence supports the need for better communication among participants and organizational units, a need mentioned by many of the participants. Therefore, the following interventions are provided to improve communication links.

First, the process should allow for sufficient time for proper implementation, evaluation and review. When the program review process was hurried, as in the teacher

education review, it caused breakdowns in the process which led to frustration and misunderstandings. Possible methods suggested for providing more time included reviewing fewer programs each year. For example, the Board could review four per six month period to allow more in-depth review. Another suggestion was to devise a method for identifying those programs who were in stress and then to review only those programs extensively. The time required by the Board for conducting the reviews has become quite burdensome, and this factor in itself caused concern. If service on the board requires a significant time commitment, such as seventy-five days which one board member indicated had been spent during one year of the program reviews, eventually only the wealthy will be able to serve. There is a disturbing philosophy inherent in that kind of service.

The participants in the process also need more structured ways of sharing information and viewpoints. By recognizing the effect of one's role on process perceptions, steps can be taken to inform the various participants of other's viewpoints so they may be aware of the larger context of the review process. Such steps would serve to improve communication between the institution and the Board. Institutional representatives could be included in the designing of the process, and board members and board staff could be invited to address faculty and student groups. One institution in the study had recently begun

such an effort through its faculty senate. The senate president also saw that all faculty members received copies of the Board's minutes. Another suggestion offered by many was to develop a comparable data base. This would not only improve communication between institutions and board but between institutions as well.

Finally, the Board should minimize the perceived threat to institutional autonomy where possible. Those charged with designing and implementing the program review process, both at the state and institutional level, should take steps to protect the academic and administrative perogatives of faculty and administration. Such steps could include providing funding for the self-studies so that the institutions feel that the Board and institutions are partners in the process rather than adversaries. Secondly, consultants should be selected more for their familiarity with regional trends and state needs than for their national prominence. Ineffective consultants harm the credibility of the process for everyone involved. Finally, some consideration should be given for putting the review back in the hands of the institutions. By doing this, the institutions would tend to be more critical of themselves, and the Board could monitor the reviews for quality and integrity.

In summary, the study found the policy types as defined by Guba (1984) to be an appropriate theoretical

framework for viewing the program review process. The Board had four policy intentions for conducting the program review. With regard to the goals of increasing Board knowledge and understanding, providing a systemwide review, and providing a self-study to improve management, the Board achieved its goals. However, in strengthening their role in governing the institutions, the Board was unable to make substantial changes in any of the education programs. The Board's failure to achieve its intention was due to three factors--the complexities of the education programs under review, the failure of the consultants to provide credible recommendations for action and the political environment in which the review operated. The study found that the role of the participants in the organization affected the participants experience in the process. In addition, in spite of efforts by the Board to recognize institutional autonomy, the process was seen as a threat to traditional academic and administrative perogatives. Interventions were suggested to improve the process for future use.

Further research should be conducted to determine if organizational role is a predictor of attitude regarding the program review process and to what extent policies change during the implementation and experience stages. Such research would be valuable in determining how policies are altered in the implementation process, and what, if any, changes in policy enactments are needed.

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